

Athol Highlanders.

THE FOLLOWING
ACCOUNT

IS TAKEN FROM THE
PUBLIC NEWSPAPERS,
PUBLISHED IN 1783;

And is sufficient to demonstrate that the
WHOLE FORCE of GOVERNMENT

Is incompetent to compel the
Soldiers of a single Scots Regiment,
To SURRENDER to their
OFFICERS, OR ANY BODY OF MEN WHATEVER,
THEIR

Rights and Liberties.

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Athol Highlanders.

A LETTER FROM LORD GEORGE GORDON TO
THE EARL OF SHELBURNE, FIRST LORD OF
THE TREASURY, &c.

MY LORD,

I HAVE just received, by the post, two Letters from his Majesty's 77th Regiment of Foot, the ATHOL HIGHLANDERS, at Portsmouth, and think it my duty to lay the following Extracts from one of them before your Lordship, as Prime Minister, without any loss of time :

TO LORD GEORGE GORDON, LONDON.

“ My Lord,

“ IMPRESSED with a deep sense of your exertions in support of the Liberties of the Inhabitants of Great Britain, particularly Scotland, a great number of his Majesty's 77th Athol Highland regiment of foot, take this method of making application to your Lordship, for your support at this critical time ; which, to illustrate the better, we beg leave to inform your Lordship, that this regiment was raised in the beginning of the year 1778, and the men were enlisted and attested for three years, or during the American war ; but now five years are elapsed, during which time we have faithfully served his Majesty, with the greatest loyalty and zeal ; and although we never were upon any actual service, yet we were always ready and willing to exert ourselves, if occasion required. But now, when the American war is over, and peace signed with France and Spain, and a cessation of Arms agreed to with Holland, behold then, and not till then, the Athol Highlanders are ordered to the East Indies.

“ If

" If this is not a *violation* of justice and humanity, and an *insidious encroachment* upon our liberties, certainly there is no such thing as liberty or humanity exists.

" However, we hope that your Lordship will not suffer such a violation of the rights and liberties of Scotsmen, but will apply in such a manner as you shall judge most proper to some member of administration, or other, for an order to stop the sailing of the East-India fleet, and for our regiment being brought on shore, and sharing the same fate as other regiments raised on the same footing.

" Though we have no particular claim to your Lordship's patronage or support, yet we, in a manner, make ourselves sure of your Lordship's interposition and support at this crisis; so much are we impressed with a sense of your love and attachment to your country and countrymen, however low in circumstances.

" We therefore beg leave once more to implore your Lordship's interposition at this time.

" We are to embark to-morrow; but there is every appearance, at present, of a *desperate resistance being made by the men*. How it will end, time alone must determine.

" We assure your Lordship that we never were so much as informed of any such intention till last Wednesday, when we got the route from Andover to this place; and notwithstanding peace being signed, we have received fresh orders for embarkation to-morrow morning at ten o'clock.

" We beg leave to assure your Lordship, that we entirely depend upon your interposition and support.

" And we remain with the most perfect respect and esteem,
My Lord,

" Your Lordship's most obedient,

" And humble Servants."

[Here the Signatures of the Leaders followed, but Lord George Gordon did not think proper to communicate them to Government.]

Portsmouth, 26th of January, 1783.

Now, my Lord, I have nothing to add upon this subject, at present, except that if your Lordship, or the King's Cabinet think, from the good opinion the Athol Highlanders are pleased to express of me, that I can be of any service in the affair, I will either go down myself directly, this night to Portsmouth, or write them a letter, or send my man

man express with a verbal message, or do any thing that is just and fair, and honourable.

Please to excuse haste. I am, &c.

Eleven o'Clock, Tuesday night,

G. GORDON.

January 28, 1783.

On Wednesday Mr. Mann, one of the King's Messengers, brought the following answer from the First Lord of the Treasury, to Lord George Gordon :

" LORD SHELburne presents his compliments to Lord George Gordon, and thanks his Lordship for his letter, and offers of service, which he did not receive till this morning; every necessary measure was taken by his Majesty's servants yesterday upon the subject of it, immediately after this account was received."

Shelburne House, Wednesday, Jan. 29.

Extract of a Letter from PORTSMOUTH.

" YESTERDAY one of the greatest scenes of confusion happened, that ever was remembered in this town. The Highland, or 77th regiment, now quartered here, were ordered on Saturday, to be ready to embark for the East Indies the next morning. In obedience to the order, they assembled on the parade, but with a determined resolution, *not to embark*, alledging, as a reason, *that their arrears were not paid*, and that they were enlisted on the express condition, to serve only three years, or during the American war: and as they conceived those conditions were fulfilled, and that they were now intended for the East-India Company's service, *where none of their Officers were going*, they declared *that they would stand by each other to the last*, and would not be compelled to embark for the East-Indies, as they believed *their Officers had bargained them away* to that Company.

" The Colonel was not present, but the Lieutenant Colonel and the other Officers insisted, that they should embark. In consequence of which the soldiers surrounded them, violently beating the Lieutenant-Colonel and several others, who narrowly escaped with wounds and bruises; after which they repaired to the magazine and store house for the regiment, which they broke open, and furnished themselves with several rounds of powder and ball.

" A party

" A party of the Invalids were ordered out to prevent the Highlanders from possessing themselves of the parade guard-house ; but being discovered, before they gained that place, the Highlanders fired on them, killed one, and wounded one or two others, which compelled the Invalids to retreat. In short, the whole was a scene of the utmost confusion. Sir Thomas Pye, and Sir John Carter, the Mayor, took every step in their power to appease them ; and on their promising that they should *not be embarked* until further orders were received, they separated, and returned to their quarters by the evening, tolerably well satisfied ; and this morning they have been informed *their embarkation will not be insisted on.*"

Extract of a Letter from PORTSMOUTH, Feb. 2.

" THE Duke of Athol, Colonel Murray, and Lord George Lenox, Commander in Chief, in Scotland, have been down here ; but the Athol Highlanders are *still determined not to go to the East-Indies.*

" They have put up their arms and ammunition into one of the magazines, and placed a very strong guard over them, whilst the rest of the regiment sleep and refresh themselves. They come regularly and quietly to the grand parade, very cleanly dressed, twice a day. Their Adjutant and non-commissioned Officers parade with them. One day it was proposed to turn the great guns on the ramparts against the Highlanders ; but the scheme was soon over-ruled. Another time it was suggested to send for some marching regiments, quartered near this place ; upon which the Highlanders drew up the draw-bridges, and placed centinels at them.

" The 81st, *another Highland regiment*, aboard the Indiamen, have also *insisted* on being *disembarked* ; and we hear that they *were to be disembarked on Tuesday.* The Athol Highlanders are then to march for Guildford, in their way home to Scotland.

" *An English regiment*, embarked for the West-Indies, *insisted* likewise on being *relanded* and cut the cabals of their transports, and are now in the barracks here. The Athol regiment is quartered among the towns' people : they do not all appear to be Highlanders. There are indeed some of Struan Robertson's men among them, and a few of the Glen-ammon people, some Stua ts of Appin, and Camerons of Lochiel ; but they chiefly consist of
young

young lads from Perth, Glasgow, Dundee, and Montrose, amounting in the whole to a thousand men.

“ The inns are all full of company from London ; and the Country people, from Suffex, and twenty miles round, flock in to see the Highlanders.

SECOND LETTER FROM LORD GEORGE GORDON, TO THE EARL OF SHELBURNE, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

My Lord,

HAVING sent your Lordship's Answer to me, to Portsmouth, for the satisfaction of the Athol Highlanders ; and having received further intelligence from the regiment on Friday night from Guildford and Godalming, I think it my duty to inclose the following Extracts from their Addresses and Letters to me, for the perusal of his Majesty's Servants.

TO LORD GEORGE GORDON, LONDON.

“ My Lord,

Godalming, 7th Feb. 1783.

“ WE have had the honour of writing to you from Portsmouth, on the 26th ult. and informed your Lordship of the intention of sending the Athol-Highlanders to the East-Indies, *in violation of the public faith and humanity.* We likewise informed your Lordship, that there was every appearance of *a desperate resistance being made by the men, which has taken place, as was foreseen.*

“ But, my Lord, we want words to express those sentiments of gratitude, with which almost every man in this regiment is inspired, on account of your Lordship's immediate and successful interposition in our behalf.

“ Nothing on earth could have given so universal joy as the appearance of your Lordship's Letter to Lord Shelburne, which was immediately followed by an enquiry in the House of Commons, which has procured us a promise from Lord George Lenox, that we shall *be effectually redressed.*

“ This promise was made *in his Majesty's name,* and given out in Public Orders ; so that it is impossible for Government to recede from it, without a *manifest violation of Public Faith.* And we are in hope, that the
Speeches

Speeches in the House of Commons will make them a little more cautious for the future.

" My Lord, we have reason to hope, that we *shall have our Rights* : and we beg leave to inform you that, under God, we look upon your Lordship's interposition as the sole means of procuring us that redress, the prospect of which fills us with sentiments easier to conceive than to express.

" The regiment in general would be glad of conveying their grateful thanks to Lord Maitland and Mr. Viner who so nobly supported their cause in the House of Commons.

" We conclude, by assuring your Lordship, that neither time, nor place, shall ever erase from our minds, that grateful sense we entertain of your favour and kindness, which has happily been the means of saving almost a thousand men from SLAVERY, which, to a Briton, is far worse than death. We are,

" With the most profound gratitude and esteem,

" My Lord,

" Your Lordship's most obedient humble Servants."

[Here the Signatures of the Leaders followed, but Lord George Gordon did not think proper to communicate them to Government.]

" P. S. The bearer will inform your Lordship of several occurrences that happened since the 26th, by which your Lordship will have a clearer idea of things than can be obtained by the above."

The Humble Address from his Majesty's 77th Regiment,
to the Right Hon. LORD GEORGE GORDON.

Head Quarters, Guildford, Surrey,

" May it please your Lordship, 7th FEB. 1783.

" WE, the Athol Highlanders, deeply impressed with a sense of your Lordship's goodness, do take this method of returning our most grateful thanks to your Lordship for having interposed in our behalf.

" Your name will ever shine in record for the zeal you have shewn for the interest of your country, in the defence of its laws, both civil and religious, against all Popish usurpation and tyranny whatsoever; and which emboldened us to lay hold upon you.

" We glory to think we have a countryman, so zealous for our rights and privileges.

" We

" We shall leave any further particulars to the bearer.

" May God long prosper your Lordship.

" We are, with humble submission,

" Your Lordship's most obedient Servants."

[Here the Signatures of the Leaders followed, but Lord George Gordon did not think proper to communicate them to Government.]

I Hope my Lord, that I have done my duty in representing the intelligence I received for the information of his Majesty's servants ; and trusting to the promise made to the Athol Highlanders, *in his Majesty's name*, by the Right Hon. Lord George Lenox, *that they shall be effectually redressed*, I have nothing further to trouble your Lordship with upon that subject.

I return you thanks for your Answer to me, and for your immediate attention to the business ; and

I am, my Lord, with all due respect,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

And humble Servant,

Welbeck-street, 10th Feb. 1783.

G. GORDON.

P. S. Your Lordship, I dare say, will be pleased to hear, that the Athol Highlanders, before they left Portsmouth, entered unanimously into a very handsome and voluntary subscription, throughout the whole regiment, for the comfort and support of the poor widow of the unfortunate invalid, who was shot by them, more through accident than intention.

Administration fully yielded to the Athol Highlanders *every point* they had contended for, suffering their return to Scotland and subsequent disbandment, without attempting to bring them to a Court Martial. *It is thus that a DETERMINED COUNTENANCE, DUE CAUTION, and PERFECT UNANIMITY, EVER SUCCEED IN DESTROYING THE SCHEMES OF DISHONEST COURTIERERS. THUS DID THESE BRAVE SOLDIERS TRIUMPH!—an EXAMPLE TO ALL OTHERS, to resist imposition, under WHATEVER SHAPE or AUTHORITY it may be attempted to be practised.*